

FROM TIMES PAST....

(adapted from the minute book of the Natural History Society 1889-1903; Public Archives Accession No. 2541 Item No. 6)

It is ironic that efforts by naturalists to have a museum established in P.E.I. have been going on for the best part of a century. Read on for an account of early efforts made by the P.E.I. Natural History Society.

One of the first acts of the newly formed Natural History Society in 1889 was to meet with the premier to request that space in the Provincial Building be placed at the disposal of the society. From then on the drive to obtain museum space became the overriding goal of the group. In full anticipation of the imminent establishment of a museum, the fledgling group began almost immediately to build a collection. This included publications and eventually a list of items as varied as bear paws, walrus skulls, shark's head, collections of native leaves and woods, salamander, Admiral Bayfield's shell collection from the St. Lawrence River and Gulf, and a cannon sunk during the seige of Louisburg in 1758. Perhaps disillusionment over their ultimate failure to convince the government to provide museum facilities was in part responsible for the eventual demise of the group in 1903.

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Efforts to have the museum established peaked in early 1901. On Dec. 29, 1900 the following resolutions were passed at an Executive Committee meeting.

I Resolved -

That it is desirable that all persons who wish to further the study of Natural Science, and Historical research should unite to press upon the Government the desirability of their setting aside in the Provincial Building a room to be used -

- (a) To provide for the formation of a Provincial Museum of Natural History
- (b) To provide for the safe custody of any historical documents that may be donated to the Province
- (c) To enable the Library Association to avail themselves of the Dodd Bequest to establish a Public Library and further to solicit from the government an annual grant of at least \$200 to provide for the publication of proceedings

II And Further —

Resolved -

That a memorial addressed to the Governor in Council be prepared in accordance with the foregoing resolution and that a strenuous effort be made to obtain the signatures of as many influential persons as possible to it, before it is handed in —

Accordingly, in early 1901 a petition was drawn up, circulated and signed by 131 of the more prominent and influential citizens of the day. Today, 81 years later this same petition (printed below) contains much that is still quite relevant. It should be noted that today much of what the petition advocated has been achieved - the province now has an excellent public library system; the Natural History Society is provided with a meeting room in the Provincial Health Building and receives financial assistance from the Dept. of Highways and Public Works to print its newsletter. The one major hurdle still to be achieved is the establishment of a provincial museum of man and nature. How appropriate it would be if such an institution could become a reality by 1989, the 100th anniversary of the first efforts by the early P.E.I. Natural History Society to obtain space for a musuem.